



Interim COVID-19 Music Guidance

Background

It is important to take extra precautions when participating in musical activities, especially if they involve vocalists and wind instrument musicians who are not yet vaccinated. Singing and instrumental music produced by woodwind or brass instruments are thought to be higher-risk activities for COVID-19 spread due to the aggressive expelling of respiratory droplets. Measures to reduce the potential risk of transmission include organizing sessions to minimize duration of interactions and contact with contaminated objects and surfaces, maintaining physical distancing of at least 3 feet, utilizing face coverings and masks, and optimizing ventilation. The following recommendations are based on the latest science around current aerosol studies and represent best practices for preventing COVID-19 transmission among faculty, students, and staff engaged in music.

Face Coverings

Individuals playing instruments in orchestra, band, and general music settings, or singing, dancing, participating in color guard, or teaching should wear a washable or disposable, multi-layered face covering or mask when inside. Individuals playing aerosol-producing wind instruments should pull down their mask, play the instrument (with a bell cover as necessary), then replace their mask over their nose and mouth. Face coverings should only be completely removed while outdoors and social distancing can be maintained.

Social Distancing

A minimum 3-foot radius should be maintained between singers and/or instrumentalists, regardless of vaccination status. For purposes of quarantine after indoor exposure(s) to a confirmed case, close contacts are defined as those within 6 feet when unmasked.

Hand Hygiene

Soap and warm water and alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol should be available for cleaning hands. A strong emphasis should be placed on hygiene and frequent hand washing. At a minimum, hand hygiene should be performed before and after contact with surfaces and equipment.

Shared Instruments or Other Shared Objects

Avoid sharing instruments, sheet music, music stands, and other commonly shared equipment. For example, if music stands are shared indoors, students may inadvertently move closer to each other to see the music. Whenever possible, students should have their own set of equipment (e.g., flags, auxiliary equipment, mallets, and drumsticks). If instruments or equipment must be shared (e.g., keyboard instruments and drums), they should be cleaned between students. Music reeds and mouthpieces should never be shared. Some instrument surfaces may be damaged by cleaning and disinfecting products. Contact your instrument dealer for guidance on disinfection and follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning. Long-term rentals through a music company or school should be properly cleaned and sanitized between rentals.

Instrument/Bell Covers when Indoors

All aerosol producing instruments should be fitted with bell covers consisting of a minimum of two layers of dense fabric. Bell covers should be made of a non-stretchy material with a MERV-13 rating (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) to protect against bacteria and virus particles.²

Cleaning and Disinfection

Instruments and equipment should be cleaned daily, following manufacturer's instructions. Spit valves should be emptied away from others to reduce the potential for exposure. Condensation from brass instruments should not drip on the floor. Each musician should have an absorbent pad (puppy pad or something similar) to catch condensation and should properly dispose of the pad after each session (or store the pad in an instrument case). Surfaces, especially common areas, should be cleaned with a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved disinfectant with demonstrated effectiveness against SARS-CoV-2, also known as [List N](#).

Cohorting and Time Recommendations

When possible, reduce the number of singers and performers in ensembles and encourage physical distance between different ensembles. A [recently commissioned aerosol study found](#) that limiting rehearsal times to 50 minutes or less significantly reduces the quantity and spread of aerosol among the individuals involved.

Outdoor Rehearsal Recommendations

Outdoor rehearsal is the safest option. Physical distancing outdoors is encouraged. Masks and bell covers for instruments are not required outdoors. However, depending on local transmission rates, mitigation efforts, including masking, may be implemented.

Indoor Rehearsal Recommendations

For prekindergarten through 12th grade schools, limit the number of students in a room based on the ability to maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance. Rehearsals should be limited to 50 minutes of playing, singing, or dancing. Masks and bell covers are required indoors. Ensure there is adequate ventilation and air exchange for the space being utilized. A minimum of three air exchanges per hour should be used. After rehearsal, the room should be vacated for at least one air exchange prior to the next use of the room, but three air exchanges are recommended.²

Indoor Airflow and Filtration Recommendations

Schools should consult with their building engineering staff to maximize the amount of fresh, outdoor air introduced into their heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC) and determine the highest MERV-rated filters their HVAC can handle. Portable HEPA filter air cleaners may be used to supplement the HVAC system filters.

Additional guidance and technical resources for ventilation for acceptable indoor air quality is available from the [American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-conditioning Engineers](#) Inc. (ASHRAE).

An air exchange per hour (ACH) is a measure of the air volume added to or removed from a space and divided by the volume of the space.³ If the air in the space is uniform or perfectly mixed (which rarely occurs), ACH is a measure of how many times the air within a defined space is replaced within an hour. The formula for calculating ACH is: $ACH = 60Q/Vol$

ACH = Number of air changes per hour; higher values correspond to better ventilation

Q = Flow rate of air in cubic feet per minute (cfm)

Vol = Space volume (length × width × height) in cubic feet

References:

¹[Public Health Ontario Synopsis: COVID-19 Transmission Risks from Singing and Playing Wind Instruments – What We Know So Far. 07/09/2020](#)

² [Second Round of Performing Arts Aerosol Study Produces Encouraging Preliminary Results- By NFHS on August 06, 2020](#)

³ "ANSI/ASHRAE [Standard 62.2-2013](#): Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality in Low-Rise Residential Buildings". Atlanta, GA: American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers. 2013.

[Part 3 Joint Transition Guidance: Starting the 2020-21 School Year](#)
[CDC Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations](#)
[CDC Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19](#)

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